



2002 Wetlands Reserve Program

Program Focus:

One of the main focuses of WRP in Florida is to provide habitat for wildlife migratory birds, especially threatened and endangered species. The other main focus of WRP is to improve water quality by removing nutrients, reducing phosphorus loads, improving stream base flow which reduces temperature, dissolved oxygen and salinity problems in downstream waters.

Florida Summary

Overview:

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands that have been altered by agricultural production practices, including pasture and forestry production. Landowners have the option of enrolling eligible lands through permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreement.

In Florida there is a strong interest and participation in the WRP to restore and protect wetlands. During fiscal year 2002, despite uncertainties about the future of the program, 29 applications covering more than 65,497 acres and requesting more than \$127,000,000 of WRP funds were received. The fiscal year 2002 WRP allocation to Florida was \$31,965,350. This allocation funded the acquisition of conservation easements and restoration of 15,821 acres of degraded wetlands.

Accomplishments:

During fiscal year 2002 there were more than 20,000 acres of wetlands in the process of being restored in Florida. In addition more than 17,000 acres of wetlands have been completely restored.

Program Benefits

WRP provides major wildlife habitat benefits. Restored areas provide habitat for amphibians which are in world wide decline, endangered species such as the bald eagle and the wood stork, reptiles such as the American alligator and migratory neotropical songbirds as well as many other types of animals, insects and plants. In addition WRP provides major water quality improvements simply by taking marginal land out of agricultural production and eliminating the need to pump nutrient laden waters into receiving rivers and streams. By slowing water down and spreading it over a restored wetland, natural filtration and settlement is enhanced. Restored wetlands also offer enhanced recreational opportunities for such activities as hunting, fishing and bird watching. Wetlands in Florida also provide substantial floodwater attenuation, which not only reduces downstream flood damages to homes and property, it also reduces the large unnatural pulse of freshwater, which is so damaging to estuarine ecosystems. By slowly releasing stored water, stream base flow is maintained into the dry season, which maintains dissolved oxygen and temperature at appropriate levels for aquatic life.

Project Highlights:

One WRP project in Polk County was completed with the installation of a low dike, which completely restored the hydrology of a section of Bowlegs Creek. The restored marsh has been heavily utilized this winter by migrating waterfowl as well as resident birds such as Ibis and Egrets. In addition to the wildlife benefits, this site (and others like it) provide storage of surface waters during the wet season and slowly release those waters during the dry season. This is tremendously important to the ecological health of the receiving water body, the Peace River. The Peace River has had its hydrology dramatically altered and now goes almost dry during the dry season. This loss of water volume has a huge impact on water quality such as temperature and

salinity in the Charlotte Harbor.

At the Broadmoor Marsh Restoration Area in Brevard County construction was completed on an active water management marsh system. The site is currently being managed for waterfowl hunting but it also provides phenomenal habitat for thousands of shorebirds and wading birds including the endangered wood stork. In addition to the wildlife benefits, the Broadmoor Marsh Restoration Area provides tremendous water quality benefits to the St. Johns River. When the area was being farmed it had to be kept drained which caused the organic soils to oxidize. The oxidation process released tremendous amounts of phosphorus into the drainage water which was discharged. The phosphorus in the water caused an over enrichment of the receiving water, which in turn caused algae blooms and fish kills in the St Johns River.

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Florida Dollars and Contracts

| Congressional Districts | Fiscal Year 2002 | | Cumulative Total (95-02) | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| | Obligated Dollars | Number of Contracts | Obligated Dollars | Number of Contracts |
| District 1 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 2 | \$0 | 0 | \$99,500 | 1 |
| District 3 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 4 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 5 | \$0 | 0 | \$2,577,409 | 2 |
| District 6 | \$0 | 0 | \$7,425,409 | 4 |
| District 7 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 8 | \$0 | 0 | \$19,152,756 | 9 |
| District 9 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 10 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 11 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 12 | \$0 | 0 | \$3,160,213 | 2 |
| District 13 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 14 | \$0 | 0 | \$415,837 | 1 |
| District 15 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 16 | \$2,036,000 | 1 | \$8,995,009 | 12 |
| District 17 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 18 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 19 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 20 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 21 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 22 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 | 0 |
| District 23 | \$29,929,350 | 1 | \$34,872,520 | 4 |
| | | | | |
| State Totals | \$31,965,350 | 2 | \$76,698,653 | 35 |

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